

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 3, 2005

CONTACT: Laura Capps/Melissa Wagoner
(202) 224-2633

**KENNEDY, ENZI, LANDRIEU WIN SUPPORT FOR LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS
IMPACTED BY KATRINA
*SENATE OVERWHELMINGLY DEFEATS EFFORT TO REOPEN THE IDEOLOGICAL
VOUCHERS DEBATE***

Washington, DC: Today Senators Kennedy, Enzi, Landrieu, Dodd, and Alexander were successful in their effort to provide one-time, temporary impact aid to local school districts and private schools impacted by Katrina. The measure also cuts fees on student loans so that college is more affordable for all Americans, taking advantage of extra savings created by the underlying bill through cuts to banks subsidies in the student loan program. Prior to the voice vote in support of their amendment, the Senate voted overwhelmingly to defeat the Ensign-Santorum-Kyl effort to turn the bi-partisan measure into a voucher bill.

“So many schools in the Gulf Coast region and around the country have graciously opened their doors to children without the assistance they deserve. I believe that the response to Katrina should be as generous as the American people are,” Senator Kennedy said. “Today I am proud that the Senate has put aside politics and ideological battles to get the necessary aid to these schools and to these children without further delay. My wife is from Southern Louisiana so we feel a special appreciation for the way that so many schools are ministering to those who lost so much.”

Without this increase in resources only 21 of 117 schools in New Orleans are expected to re-open during this school year. Over 370,000 students have been displaced by the hurricane and currently, 223,000 public and private students from Louisiana remain displaced. Across the country, 444 private schools have opened their doors to displaced students from the Louisiana, Alabama, and Mississippi. The aid provided by this measure would flow through the public school system and maintain public accountability while assisting both public and private schools across the country that have generously taken in thousands of students.

The Katrina relief portion of the measure totals \$1.66 billion and each eligible district will receive quarterly installment payments for each student enrolled in a given quarter in either a public or a private school in that district. Maximum total payment is \$6,000 per student and \$7,500 per student with disabilities, not to exceed cost of tuition at private schools. The measure would also reduce origination fees for student borrowers by one half of one percentage point, totaling approximately \$900 million. A summary of the bill is below.

In the past several weeks to help develop his education legislation, Senator Kennedy has visited New Orleans, spent time with evacuees at Camp Edwards in Massachusetts and met with recovery experts and officials from the area to determine the best course of action to help get schools back on their feet and accommodate displaced students. He recently met with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and discussed provisions in the proposal for aid to private schools. At a HELP Committee hearing he convened with Senator Enzi, Kennedy heard moving

testimony from Superintendent Diane Roussel of Jefferson Parish who said: “Money isn’t always the answer to solving the ills in our public schools, but when we’re talking about equipment, supplies, rebuilding, and maintaining our teaching workforce, money is the answer.”

Main Points on the Bill:

Summary of Enzi/Kennedy Amendment to Reconciliation Bill

This amendment redirects additional savings generated by cuts in bank subsidies in the education provisions in the Reconciliation bill to two purposes:

- 1) Further decreasing origination fees for student borrowers by one half of one percentage point (\$900 million)
- 2) Providing immediate relief for the elementary and secondary students and schools affected by Hurricane Katrina (\$1.66 billion)

Origination Fees:

The underlying bill reduces origination fees for students by 50 basis points. This amendment would reduce those fees by an additional 50 basis points, for a total 1% reduction.

Hurricane Katrina Elementary and Secondary Education Recovery:

Districts Damaged by the Hurricane: The Secretary may award special school reopening grants to States for local educational agencies significantly impacted by Hurricane Katrina. The grants would supplement, not supplant, FEMA funds. Funds shall be used for recovering data, initial replacement of instructional materials and equipment, establishing temporary facilities, and other related activities necessary to reopen schools. Grantees will be prohibited from using funds for construction or renovation of schools. Appropriates \$450 million for these purposes.

Funds for Displaced Students: The Secretary shall award one-time emergency impact aid to states for the 2005-2006 school year for local educational agencies that have displaced students enrolled in public or private schools in their area, and for Bureau of Indian Affairs-funded schools that have enrolled displaced students. Each eligible district will receive quarterly installment payments for each student enrolled in a public or private school in their area in a given quarter, for a maximum total payment of \$6,000 per student and \$7,500 per student with disabilities.

From these amounts, the LEA will provide impact aid payments on behalf of each student enrolled in an eligible private school located in the district. Total per-pupil assistance for private school students shall be equal to that provided to displaced students in public schools, except that it may not exceed the cost of tuition. Funding for students enrolled in private schools cannot be used for religious purposes, and existing civil rights laws apply to recipients of these funds.

States must establish income eligibility criteria for aid to students enrolled in private schools.

Funds can only be used for expenses incurred during the 2005-2006 school year. Appropriates \$1.2 billion.

Reciprocity for Highly-Qualified Teachers: Grants temporary reciprocity for NCLB purposes

in recognizing highly-qualified teachers and paraprofessionals displaced by Katrina. Also authorizes an extension of one year for Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi areas impacted by Katrina relative to the deadline in Sec. 1119 of NCLB for highly qualified teachers and paraprofessionals.

Homeless Education: Authorizes an additional appropriation of \$10 million for the Education for Homeless Children and Youth program under NCLB. Funds shall be distributed to State education agencies to assist local educational agencies in supporting students who are newly homeless due to Katrina.

###